794 776 778 [563]

In some villages, the sacrificer never consumes butter or milk, foods which the Peul furnish the Bambara.

the culprit and deprives the villagers of their protector.

794 776 825 The spirit of the dasiri sometimes has as its compansion an animal which seems to represent the group's ancestor. At Ségou, it is a crocodile; at Ouélenguena, a she-ass; at Koulikoro, a monkey; in other places it is a male goat which is replaced when it dies. At Konodimini there are a series of deep intercommunicating wells which would have served as homes for the ancestors. These holes are at present occupied by hyenas which are considered to be incarnations of the blacksmiths of former times and which are the dasiri of the place.

The dasiri's animal is free to enter homes and to eat what it finds. It is often fed by the inhabitants. No one may attack it and whoever breaks this taboo, set on by a vengeful nyama of which he cannot [582 626] rid himself, risks being forbidden to marry, even being no longer tolerated in his native village (1).

1. This was, at Soroba, the case of Dji Diara, who, after killing a hyena, could not marry as no woman was willing to link her destiny to his.

794 776 782 As its name indicates, the function of the dasiri is to maintain the stability and integrity of the village. It is the "support of the inhabitants' lives"; the numerous rituals (individual or collective), of which it is the object, reveal the importance of its role as well as the diversity of the beings invoked. To Faro are addressed prayers for rain; to the ancestors prayers for questions /139/ concerning the family; and to the spirit of the tree when it is a matter of stopping an epidemic. But directly or indirectly, any sacrifice offered to the dasiri is offered to Faro. The victims (sheep or fowl) and the offerings (cotton bands, kola nuts) are always white (see Pl. 3, b).

794 778 852 When children reach the age of six or seven, they are led to the tree; they sit on its roots upon which kola nut juice is spat, and are, by this fact, introduced into the village cult. They are then presented to all the allies senanku and especially to the blacksmiths with whom they proceed to joke.

794 because of the offerings made by other men. Keep the flute and
534 since you are Soma and chief of the Komo, let all the Komo flutes
713 be blessed because of this one." By this he meant that the Komo
539 flute, like the other ritual objects, would hereafter contain his strength, nyama. He added that, when men wished to call him or to talk to him, they would have to do it through the intermediary of this instrument.

794 Before each occasion when the mask is brought out, a sacrifice is
534 performed upon the flutes "to improve their sound." Faro's flute is used in the rituals performed at the river bank, to pray to him or to thank him. To play the flute is equivalent to reciting his device; he is forced to hear. The Komo flute is used only during the masked ceremonies; it makes those who hear it say that the Komo is "a thing with a soft throat" (1).

1. Fɛ̃ kã̀ duma.

In former times the chief alone was allowed to play the flute, whatever its type; death was sanctioned for infraction of this rule. Ordinary flutes /154/ of a style different from those belonging to the cult are used by children.

E. Initiation to the Komo

794 Three days after the birth of a boy, his father presents him with
852 the elements which he has contributed to the making of the Komo boli and recites the komo kumã̀: "You, Komo boli, these things are inside; society of the Komo, these things are inside; customs of the Komo, these things are inside; you are a child, you are going to approach the age of the elders; Komo boli, here is my child, watch over him" (2).

2. Komo boli la, nin waliw ba kono;
Komo dyɛ̃ la, nin fɛ̃w ba la; komo sira
la, nin kunko ba kono; i ye demisɛ̃ ye
i bi ta makorobaya ye; komo boli nde fle,
tyɛ do, i dyã̀ to a la.

He then returns the child to its mother with these words: "The son has been introduced to the secret of masculinity; he has received

794 852 the Komo's blessings, the Komo's blessing is with him; let him join the men, let his light be with us" (1). The child is then presented in

1. De dyira la tyę gundo la; ani komo ye dukaw mine nuofe, komo ka barka bi a fe; ka fara tyew ka, ka yele kę an ta ye.

the same way to its grandmother.

794 These acts anticipate the initiation which later will make the newborn an adolescent member of the Komo society.

794 561 [564] In each village this society is composed of all initiated men, divided into age grades, which are themselves composed, theoretically, of the men circumcised in the same year. Only the griot are not admitted. It is permissible for an individual who has not been initiated immediately after his circumcision to be admitted later if the society agrees. He will belong, regardless of his age, to the age grade with which he will have been initiated.

One age grade has precedence over the other which follows. This hierarchical order is followed strictly in daily life as well as during councils and ceremonies. To break these rules of seniority would mean to disturb the order even in the hereafter, since the Komo gathers together the sum total of both living and dead members.

794 [735] The recruitment of members varies from one region to another because of the expenses involved in the admission ceremony and in participation in the ritual. Some villagers refrain from joining because of poverty, and it also happens that some conversions to Islam are brought about by this fact.

/155/ The initiation is performed at night. The kotigi (2) presents

2. See p. 156.

to the future members, one by one, the ancestors' tools. He explains to them their origin, their history, their role, and their spiritual value. He teaches them the respect they owe the ancestors for their courage, their labors, and the technological inventions of which they were either initiators or guardians. The mask is removed from its shelter and dressed by a member; in front of the children the man who wears it unmasks himself and reveals to them the meaning of the different parts of the costume.

844 273 271 contact with water which symbolizes "the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni in the matter of family names" is a prefiguration of name-giving.

851 As soon as the patriarch hears of the birth, he comes and shakes the family pembele over the child's head, three or four times according to the sex, in order to pass on to him the nyama and the qualities of the deceased person from whom he has inherited the ni and the dya. Then, he brings the family altar kere la boli ni into the house of the woman who has just given birth and places it before him. Crouching upon the ground, with fingers spread over the object, he pronounces the following prayer: "You, boli, make me a chief, so that my family prospers, a child is /178/ born, his soul is entrusted to you; I invoke you, boli, night and day" (1).

1. Boli tigi i ka masaya kanu ñe, de wolo la, a ni kalifa be i la, ngo boli ɲu ani kle.

Holding the child on his knees, he places the object on its chest for three consecutive times. Repeating the prayer, he next cuts the throat of a red rooster over the open sac, dips the right index into the blood, and, depending upon whether it is a boy or a girl, makes three or four crosses on the forehead of the newborn who thus becomes the "son of the boli," boli dɛ.

A white sea shell, krokrodya (2), is placed before the newborn

2. Cardita vingens.

and gently moved about to "condense his dya within him." Then it is tied to the child's foot for three or four days according to its sex. 846 824 751 At the same time, the mother who is entrusted with the child's dya until the name-giving ritual, adorns herself during the eight days following the birth with a collar (madya, "dya of the person") made from the odoriferous root of the tree bearing the same name. She will wear it until the child takes its first steps so as to protect it and to recall that she herself carried the soul of the newborn.

553 852 The name is given on the eighth day by the chief of the Komo. Under the dubale, a tree which shelters the village meetings, the elders assemble around the Komo altars which have been carried to the spot (3). If it is a first son, the father gives one hundred kola nuts,

553
852

3. If the village has no Komo, the name may be given above the paternal Tuafebla.

two jars of millet beer, a ram which will be sacrificed, and money to the griot who will sing during the ceremony.

[789 826] A lock of the newborn's hair is shaved off and kept in a case (sebe) which, before being carried away, will be hidden in an oil container for the following reasons: to protect the person from magical practices; to prevent a donkey from eating it, an occurrence which would cause the child's death; to permit him to seek for himself health and a long life in the image of his hair which will have remained in good condition.

The rest of the hair is carried by a female relative to the river, into which it is thrown in honor of Faro. Next a band of white cotton called faro fini (literally, Faro's clothing), on which someone has "spat" kola nut juice, is bound around the forehead of the newly baptized baby to indicate his subjugation to the spirit.

The senior elder then examines with attention the hairline and the meeting point of the eyebrows on the forehead before announcing in a loud voice the signs determining the child's character (tere). Then he grasps the child and swings it /179/ seven times from east to west, eight times from south to north above the altar while giving it the forename (toko) which he has inherited from a dead person along with the spiritual principles (1). The griot recite the father's genealogy

1. According to another source of information, the eldest son receives the forename of his paternal grandfather, the second son that of his father, and the following sons those of the mother's fathers and grandfathers.

(burudyu); the senanku comes to joke with the newborn and gently pulls his nose and ears.

852 304 On the same day the blacksmith draws on the child's face the wolo ti, consisting of seven vertical frontal scars and two horizontal scars under each eye. The first scars represent the complete man (ni and dya); the second, representing the number two, symbol of

852 304 "the unknown in creation" (see pp 23 and 24), recall man's existence in this state. Consequently he is conscious of the unknown and has the possibility of apprehending it. These scars act upon the tere of the child and give him at the same time strength, courage, virtue, as well as the strength to penetrate the knowledge of the invisible (1).

[842]

1. They may be redrawn at the root of the nose of an adult who has despaired of having any children, or on the thigh of a woman who wishes to be fertile. These scars, drawn at birth, are not the only ones which the Bambara wear. See S. de Ganay, "On a Form of Cicatrization among the Bambara."

852 553 326 In a blacksmith's family, the name is given near the paternal forge. In the presence of all the village artisans, the kotigi shaves the head of the newborn while an elder prepares seven small sticks, over each one of which he pronounces the name of an ancestor. The kotigi, whose eyes are blindfolded, pulls out in succession three sticks from the group; the third determines the name which he immediately proclaims. While the women chant, the father removes from his altar the kongobwona axe as well as the other ritual objects. The throat of a sheep is cut over all these objects while a prayer is recited. The newborn's head is rubbed first with the axe, then with shaved off hair saturated with sacrificial blood. This gesture introduces the child into the family group. Next he receives the scars of the blacksmiths.

Circumcision

304 561 Whereas in former times circumcision was mandatory and performed upon young men (about twenty years), it is now practiced at an early age if the parents are wealthy enough to afford the expenses involved.

/180/ Because of this fact, a child of eight years may be circumcised with an adolescent of sixteen to eighteen years, whose parents are poor and have only slowly accumulated the articles necessary for the ceremony. These two boys will belong to the same age grade (flã̂), and will be comrades (flani) all their lives, having the same rights and duties. Age thus has a restricted role in social relations.

that she may speak to him freely. When the day of union comes, the wife herself prepares her husband's food; then she lies on the left side (the feminine side) and her husband on the right side, and she cannot be impregnated except by a union twice repeated.

These corporal techniques[1] are dictated and ordered by the religious imperatives which pervade the life of the Bambara from before his birth until after his death.

What we have said of the Bambara's religion and of his conception of the world enables us to understand that there cannot be for him a complete break between life and death: birth is a reincarnation; death is not destruction. This is why a man's life does not present one substantial unity but is divided into a certain number of distinct periods, each of which is inaugurated by a rite of transition that marks the death of an anterior state and the rebirth to a new life.

a. Before Birth

From the first month after his conception, the infant constitutes a person who receives a series of spiritual forces emanating from his father's side of the family and especially from the recently deceased ancestor whose name he will receive. At the same time, he inherits all of the paternal taboos, which the mother must respect during her pregnancy. It is only after his birth, at the time he receives his name, that the infant receives the spiritual forces coming from his mother's side. These forces are transmitted through the medium of the priest and the ancestors of the priest.

From then on, the infant is required to observe all the taboos of the beings who have had a part in the composition of his personality; he thus finds himself tightly bound to the society in which he will live.

b. Birth Rites

At birth the baby is washed with millet beer (1) (to purify him)

1. For all these rites, see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

[1 [i.e., sexual reproduction and childrearing; see pp. 117-119. -Analyst]

852 with water added (to recall the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni). The patriarch shakes the family pembélé three or four times over the infant's head to give him the nyama of the recently deceased whose ni and dya he has inherited. Then he places the altar (kere la boli ni) on the infant's chest three times, after having recited a prayer. He cuts the throat of a red cock, dips his index finger in the blood, and traces three or four crosses on the newborn's forehead, who be-
553 comes boli din. The name is given the eighth day by the Komo chief
[431] under the doubalé, where the old people assemble. The father offers 100 kola nuts, two jars of millet beer, plus a ram whose throat is cut, and money for the griot. Part of the baby's hair is shaved off and kept in [90] a case (sebe); another part of the hair is thrown in the river as a sacrifice to Faro. The eldest of the old men examines the roots of the infant's hair and the conjunction of the eyebrows, thus determining its character (téré). Then he swings the baby seven times in an east-west direction and eight times north-south, giving him the first name of the deceased ancestor and, at the same time, his spiritual principles. The griot recite the father's mottoes, the sénanku come to joke with the baby, and the blacksmith traces the scarifications.

845 Twins. We have seen the belief that in the beginning twins were always born, and Faro subsequently punished man by abolishing double births which he no longer accords except to certain privileged persons. For the Bambara, twins are new beings who inherit neither the ni nor the dya of any ancestor. Special rites are observed at their
[201] birth which is announced by showing the raised right and left index fingers, without saying anything, for the proclamation would be so powerful that it would be harmful to the newborn twins (see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion]. 553 The rite of name-giving is carried out on the bank of the river. The following day, accompanied by another woman, the mother goes in search of millet and cotton which she gathers in identical calabash ladles. Equal gifts are put in the ladles, which the mother presents
[301] in crossed hands. Later, the twins are fitted with metal bracelets representing their dya, and, in certain regions, with a pendant in the form of double slave irons. The twins always stay together; they
856 wear identical clothes. If one dies in early infancy, the mother places on the mat beside the surviving infant a small doll made by

Chapter 6

Worship, Celebrations, Saraka, Sacrifices, and Dances in Honor of the Gnéna

1. The First Two Groups of Gnéna

781 776 The fundamental bases of all Bambara devotions are first, and above all, fear and secondly, the desire to have everything without effort or work. The Bambara respect a strong, powerful being because it can punish and reward, and since their fetishes are not equal in power, they take care not to honor all equally.

776 782 852 The genii of the first two groups have no priest or official minister, and public, solemn sacrifices are offered them very rarely. In the dry season, however, some festivals are held in their honor. The chief participants are children, who on these days stuff themselves with /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, and with sorghum cakes. When they are full they take the leftovers outside the village to a place where paths cross, and many hens, dogs, and other animals come for the booty. The poor and unfortunate also come, for [735] they, too, may take their share; every saraka (1) belongs to them.

1. Tax, tribute, alms.

776 852 Little girls and boys take part in these festivals, but there is a special one for unexcised girls, and those who are soon to be excised and are getting ready for this great event in Bambara life bear /106/ all the expenses. It is the celebration of soli basi k'li (1), of which I will speak at greater length in my chapter on circumcision.

1. Soli, "young girls who will soon be excised"; basi, a kind of couscous with very small grains which distantly resembles semolina; k'li, "obtained by singing and clapping hands."

776 village and in our families; grant us plenty and wealth, give us many
782 wives, healthy and vigorous children, and a long and hearty old age."
796 If the occasion is semipublic /109/ or public, a general sacrifice is always offered in the name of the family, the quarter, or the village, and then individual sacrifices follow. On the days when they are held, there are always dances and drinking bouts, for the favors of a fetish cannot be obtained except by leaping to the sound of drums and by getting drunk.

At the risk of repeating myself, I cannot resist giving the fascinating side of the Negroes' attachment to their fetishism and describing the festivals and celebrations in honor of the principal fetishes -- in order that the reader may gain a greater understanding and feeling for their worship.

The N'tomo, the Special Children's Fetish

●852 The harvest is over, and the yield of the field cultivated by the
796 children during the winter, together with the small donations received from the people of the village, allows the n'tomigi (head of the confraternity) and his siéré (aide, deputy) to furnish its initiates and the old men -- the latter are never forgotten -- with a plentiful feast of kola nuts, millet beer, or d'lo, and /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, or dégé. The day of the celebration is set by the head of the village and by the elders, and everyone prepares for it two weeks in advance. In the blon, or entrance huts, and in the
852 shade of trees, one sees nothing but old men cutting and sewing dioki,
796 bougi, bogo, and yaba (1), which will be worn for the first time on
291

1. Dioki, a large blouse. Bougi, near Ségou, a kind of pants without legs; in Bani country, a strip of cloth three to four fingers wide which goes around the waist, passes between the thighs, and drops in back, forming flaps over the heavy part of the thighs.

852
796
291

The end of this strip is tucked up.
Bogo, garment worn by girls until their marriage, consisting of a strip of cloth tied at the waist and falling in back to make a train.
Yaba, boys' jacket, especially common in Bani country.

that day. A swarm of children patch the yellow or white blouses that will be worn during the dance, and grease and re-grease the mask of the n'tomo. They pay special attention to the horns, which are often hidden under little thongs of red leather decorated from end to end with well-polished cowrie shells as white as snow.

852 796 782 But now we come to the longed-for day! All the little rebels go single file to the fetish tree, and each carries the hen, its feet tied, which he intends for the sacrifice. They /110/ all take off their blouses -- the little undergarment allows freer movement and is less hampering -- and, after some whispering they finally end up squatting, fixing their big, black eyes on the leader, the n'tomotigi, who begins the sacrifice with the assistance of his aide, the siéré.

This little fellow is really funny, as with the solemnity of an old man he pours the dégé, sprinkles the blood of the hens, and noisily spits the remains of a piece of chewed kola nut onto the sacred tree, the dwelling of his genie. I do not doubt that he is convinced, and thoroughly convinced, that he is not addressing a tree trunk that has no consciousness; he believes that he is in the presence of who watches him, waits for him, and asks only to grant his wishes. Since he is addressing a powerful being, fear and emotion at first make him tremble; but gradually his voice grows firmer, and very clearly he pronounces his formula: "N'tomo ye, see this hen, a beautiful hen, isn't it? It is fat! n'tomo, on behalf of all of us I offer you this hen as a sacrifice. Favor us, defend us against the fury of the genii of the bush and against the malicious. Make us strong and vigorous, give us plenty to eat and drink, drive sickness from us. Give us water and a good harvest, n'tomo, and give wealth to our families."

852 796 782 After this special sacrifice come the individual sacrifices, and the very young boys who are henceforth to belong to the n'tomo prostrate themselves before the fetish tree and take an oath to reveal nothing to the uninitiated, and especially not to little girls. This oath is not at all trivial: "If you talk, if you reveal your oath," says the leader showing each one some black powder, "you will die." And they all reply without trembling: "May I die!"

852 796 When the rite of admission is over, each initiate plucks his hen and draws it, and while the victims simmer over the fire in an earthen conari, the youngsters beat drums and abandon themselves to the dance, and so into a frenzy which continues under the eye of the fetish, in the shade of its preferred tree until the time of the feast. Each child in turn dances the dance of the fetish, which consists of leaps and capers and a graceful twirling of a flexible switch. To dance he dons [292] the white or yellow blouse of the fetish (n'tomo ka dloki, "the blouse of the n'tomo"), which is white (dje) or black, yellow (fign, as I said in the preceding chapter) /sic/ /111/, and takes the horned mask, the n'tomo kongolo ("head of the n'tomo") by means of which he externalizes in a concrete form his concept of the genie.

Victims abound, and the feast is plentiful. There is enough for everybody, and there is not one on that day who does not lick his fingers and say with a smile: "Ne ne fara de! (1), How full I am!"

1. Né, "me," "I"; fara, "am full"; dé, "surely."

The little boys' families contribute much, for Bambara mothers and little sisters have good hearts. Thanks to them, every initiate can offer from 10 to 20 liters of dégé, the same amount of d'lo; and his gourd of to (gruel) holds enough to tire six to eight big eaters. In addition to the dessert, which is kola nut, each boy receives a new garment for himself and a light bogo and sometimes a tafé (2) for

[291] 2. Tafé, rectangular piece of cloth which the women wear around their hips.

85 796 his "sister of the heart." In fact, on the day of his admission to the n'tomo every small Bambara chooses a n'golo mouso to whom he gives a small gift each year. The dreadful part of this custom is that in Bambara country the n'golo mouso is less prudish than the girl friend or sweetheart of a little French boy and is often a little maid-of-all-work who lends herself without qualms to unhealthy and indecent play.

After the feast, which takes about three hours, the n'tomo déou (sons of the n'tomo) leave the place of sacrifice and return to the village in Indian file, preceded by drums. D'lo, or millet beer, awaits them, but before touching the divine liqueur they must perform a bloody rite. It is hideous, and yet, it is the high point and chief attraction of the celebration!

852 796 785 On the public square, in front of drums that give the measure and beat the rhythm, the young n'tomo déou flagellate themselves, usually until they bleed. The old men run up, dragging their mats after them; the women, squatting on their tiny stools, clap their hands and sing; and mothers wrap the loins of their children in long white scarves to protect their lower abdomens from misdirected blows. The n'tomigi and his siéré -- honor to whom honor is due -- go into the arena, and while the little leader holds his switch above his head with both hands, /112/ the siéré beats him hard with his own switch on the back chest, calves, soles of his feet, and everywhere. When he is tired of beating or his switch breaks, he stops and the leader in his turn gives a round to his aide. In this way, two by two, according to age and size, the children flagellate (1) each other. The flick, flack

1. In Bani country each child flagellates himself. Although that is not the usual custom, it may be encountered in many villages.

of whip lashes, which cause blood to spurt, bruise the flesh, and always leave a furrow as wide as a thumb, may often be heard for hours. Little boys of six or seven years often stop at the second blow to scratch their backs and open their mouths to cry, but I have seen some stay unmoved just like their elders of ten to twelve years, without a

852 tear, a complaint, or a cry of pain, and they are so imperious that
796 one might think they were of bronze.
785

The N'golo, the Special Fetish of the Circumcised

852 The children of this fetish, whose function I explained in the
794 preceding chapter, grant themselves many days of celebration in its honor in the course of the year. The main festival, however, is annual and in addition to the dégé, a hen, and two kola nuts offered by each initiate, a goat is sacrificed on behalf of all.

Since it is from this fetish that the fla-n-to organization derives its existence, its members, the to-n-déou, offer drink and food to the whole village for two or three days. The women, too, contribute their share to this horrible drinking bout, and their queen (fama, massa) -- humbling herself before the to-n-tigi, head of the fla-n-to and priest of the n'golo, who thoughtlessly wastes the produce of the field worked by his subjects in the winter -- distributes many kola nuts and adds still more to the d'lo, which already flows in streams.

The beer is drunk out of doors on the public square, and everyone -- men, women, and children -- is there, shouting, dancing,
[346] and getting drunk. Seated under a goua, a shed covered with coarse mats, /113/ and surrounded by his acolytes (the siéré, the djéli, and the djalatiké), the to-n-tigi sits in the place of honor, and it is he who directs the drinking and the dances. He is really king on these days, and all obey him at the slightest sign, gesture, or word. When he gets up to romp or take a turn before the drums, he is honored; all the initiates call "you you," shake their caps (ban fla), and compete as to who will take his gun, spear, stick, or ax and beat the time for the dance. But he wants to speak; he must speak; he feels the need to issue an order, to give thanks, or to impose a light fine on his band; and his spokesman runs to his side. He repeats the speech of his chief word for word and sentence by sentence, and sometimes even adds a comment of his own, for some Bambara have a sharp wit and very easily find a saying to bring a laugh.

852 194 Every time one of the three principal members of the staff, wants to dance, respects are paid to them or to their leader, and all day and all night nothing is heard but frightful "you you" and atrocious cries. There is a protocol for everyone to follow, and before each to-n-dé begins to prance in front of the drums, he goes and bows to his leader to show his devotion and respect for him. He holds himself like a spring, brandishes the gun, ax, or stick that he will use in the dance, and in one jump strikes his feet together under the nose of the one to whom he is paying his respects. The women are quieter and show their respect by a genuflection before the master.

In addition to his staff the master of a n'golo, the to-n-tigi, has pages, a standard bearer, trumpeters, and soldiers, and to vary the program he goes here and there with his frenzied band to greet an elder and give him a serenade. In some villages custom decrees that the youths put on the best they have in the way of clothing; in others, on the contrary, they must get themselves up in horrible, dirty rags so that, on seeing them thus clad, one asks where they could have dug up all these horrors. They must amuse themselves and be [522] amused, laugh and cause laughter, and this last aim is always accomplished as they have such priceless mimics. /114/

The Mouso ka djiri, the Women's Special

776 796 831 It is impossible to know all the genii responsible for watching over women, for they are legion. Every month, at the new moon, the women organize a dance in their honor, and every year they make a public, solemn sacrifice to them. The most widespread is the mouso ka djiri, and its worship flourishes especially in Bani country.

When its festival comes, all the excised women offer it a little /millet/ flour mixed with water, a hen, and two kola nuts, and the head of the village, or, in his absence, an elder, goes and reddens the bark of the fetish tree (1). There is no need for me to go into

[782]

1. Some people assert that they have seen women sacrificing. I have seen women perform saraka involving bloodshed, but never a sacrifice.

this sacrifice at length, for in the preceding chapter I stated the function of the fetish; it may be imagined that the ladies and maidens ask for whatever makes a woman strong and beautiful. Moreover, the indecent dances to which they abandon themselves under the sacred tree sufficiently reveal their inner thoughts. They have only one -- to show their breasts to the fetish and scratch their navels on its bark; in some villages custom demands this, and it is required of all. Young girls do it to develop their breasts, married women to become fertile, and all of them to be protected from the unpleasant accidents peculiar to their sex.

There is no festival without a feast and none without drinking, and the women offer the whole village sorghum gruel and beer for a drinking bout. They also offer kola nuts to all the elders and heads of families, and they know better than to withhold this treat from fathers, husbands, grown sons, older brothers, and those they love.

The Sinsin, the Special Twin's Fetish

The sacrifice to a sinsin is made on the umbilical cord which is hung in the center of plates of woven grass that constitute the fetish. Each plate belongs to one of the twins and even bears his name. The sacrifices in honor of this fetish are always double; for each child separately, the family offers /millet/ flour /115/ mixed with water, millet beer, a kola nut, and a hen.

This is strictly a family fetish; the father of the family is its priest, and only the children and their parents are present at the sacrifices. Everything is done in a quiet and happy intimacy, and although there may be a few drunkards here and there, there is never an orgy. Sacrifices to a sinsin are made very frequently to bring its blessing to the mother and children; they are also performed on all occasions of the slightest importance in the lives of the twins: when their hair is cut eight days after birth, at the tattooing festival, at circumcision, at marriage, etc. Once a year a more formal sacrifice is made; the women cook d'lo, the millet beer, and the

845
778 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are
852 invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

776 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that
621 its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

Election of the priest

776 The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted,
621 and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still
793 lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and
[482] fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door," "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses," "shades."

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

[846] [852] 553 The navel dries between the sixth and eighth day. The headman and elders are told of the event, and all the heads of families (the gouatigou) come and sit in order of age and rank at the entrance door of the hut which opens into the court of the confined woman. The religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba (2), goes alone into the hut

[793]

2. Usually it is the religious head, priest of the dasiri, who shaves the child, but there are exceptions to this rule. In some villages it is the civil head who performs the tonsure; in others this task is the prerogative of a family. Sometimes the shaving is done by the father or the grandfather. The families in which this custom is followed are not pure Bambara but are mixed with Marka blood.

and /170/ shaves the head of the infant on its mother's knees. Long [201] [431] lines of women push into the inner court, clap their hands, let out shrill cries of "kouyo kouyo" as signs of joy, and give their friend a small present of millet and cotton (1).

1. The women give a handful of cotton and about a pound of millet.

When the head of the child has been shaved and well cleaned, the headman lays his hands on him to drive away evil spirits that might wish to harm his life; he gently strokes his back and chest and, spitting lightly, recites a short formula which he alone knows and can understand. Then he goes and sits among his people, and the father presents him with eleven kola nuts on a platter of braided grass. The heads of families, in order of age, place their offering of 40 to 80 cowrie shells (2) on this same platter, and the gnéna-sonnaba asks

2. The men give 40 cowrie shells. The generous ones go as high as 80.

852
553

the father or the grandfather (3) the name of the child. Instead of

3. It is the head of the family who names the child.

answering the question, he points to the kola nuts and the cowrie shells and says to the headman: "Let us divide the kola nuts and give to each the price of the name." Two kola nuts are set aside, and the cowrie shells are divided into two equal parts, one of which the headman takes to the mother with two kola nuts one red and one white.

The nine remaining kola nuts are divided among those present, and each family head receives at least one piece, which is the ni woro (ni, "life"; woro, "kola"). Each one also receives 4 or 5 cowrie shells (4), and the head of the family announces the name of his son and

4. Toua da kola: (toua, "name"; da, "to give," "to impose"; kolo, "cowrie shells").

gives the reason for his choice. Everybody shouts: "A toua dara, he has received a name, may God preserve him, may he be strong and vigorous, may he be a help and support to his parents!"

The women do not know the name that has been given, but they know it has been announced, and the woman who bound the navel takes the child from the arms of the mother and washes it three times with warm water and soap. When she has done this, three times she takes a mouthful of cool water and spits it on the nape of his neck, his back, and his thighs, saying: "May God /171/ preserve you, do not go away, stay with us, be strong and always well, may your descendants be many!"

With the child in her arms, she goes to the door of the entry hut where the father is and asks him the name. When she knows it, she goes back to the women and lays the infant on the knees of an old woman. The latter blows into his ears three times and then six times -- three times for each ear -- and shouts to him at the top of her lungs: "Kouyo kouyo, i toua dara (here she says the name),

852 533 Alla m'i balola, kouyo kouyo, you are called (. . .), may God make you live!" Two women take up the corners of the rectangular cloth which will hold the child cradled on its mother's back, and the little one is rolled three times on an ax head if it is a boy or on the iron stick used to clean cotton if it is a girl, as if to say: "Be strong and vigorous, be a help and a support to your family!"

The child is placed astride on the back of a young girl and knotted into the rectangular piece of cloth, its mother's tafé, or loincloth. An old woman sticks a pinch of chewed kola nut on its forehead, on each side of its cranium above the ears, and on top of its head, and she knots a white cloth band a finger wide around its forehead. The girl receives a handful of millet, goes to the public square to pound it, and, with the child still on her back, prepares dégé (millet flour mixed with water). When she has prepared the gruel, she goes and offers it to the mother, who puts a pinch of it into the little one's moth, and the ceremony is finished. Not entirely, however, for a few old women run around the village with a gourd of dégé in their hands. They look for sterile women, who shut themselves in their huts and hide. Some are always caught, and they are covered with dégé; the more they cry out and the more they struggle, the more they get whitewashed.

846 852 302 After her child is shaved, a Bambara woman goes about the village and attends to her work. But she does not braid her hair for three months if she has given birth to a boy and for four months if she has had a girl (1), /172/ nor does she go to neighboring villages.

1. Women who braid their hair are not of pure stock.

When this period is over, she braids her hair, covers herself with beads, with bits of amber and bracelets, dresses in her best, makes herself beautiful, and goes to present her baby, all running with butter, to the headman and elders. Her husband grants her several days' leave [574] (1), and she immediately goes to her family.

1. About 8 to 15 days.